



State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Faculty Governance Instructional Quality and Academic Standards Committee

Passed Unanimously at 11/20/13 College-wide Governance Meeting

ESF Grading Policies and Procedures

I. Instructor authority.

Each credit bearing course taught at SUNY-ESF will have at least one Instructor of Record holding faculty appointment. Instructors of Record have the sole authority and responsibility for the assignment of grades for each student registered to a particular course, except when the instructors are unable to act (**Section II**) or a grade grievance is adjudicated by a hearing board (**Section XI**).

II. Assignment of grades when the instructor is not available.

In the event that the Instructor of Record is unavailable or unable¹ to assign course grades within a reasonable timeframe (typically within no more than 30 days of the scheduled completion of a course), the associated department chair or division director shall work with appropriate faculty to evaluate student work and assign grades.

III. Grade Assignment

Grades are assigned in all credit bearing courses to reflect how well students have met the student learning outcomes of the course. The course syllabus should describe how the final grade in a course is determined. Courses at SUNY-ESF are graded using a letter grade basis on a scale from A to F, unless the catalog course description indicates that a Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) basis shall apply. Courses A to F may have intermediate +/- designations as specified in the syllabus.

¹ “Unavailable or unable” is defined as follows: when an instructor of record is either deceased, physically or mentally incapacitated (and on official medical leave from the institution), or permanently separated from the university.

A. Grade Definitions. Assignment of grades shall be based on the following definitions and translate to the indicated number of grade points toward the grade point average (GPA):

Grade	Undergraduate Definition	Graduate Definition	Grade Points
A	Excellent	Excellent	4.000
A-			3.700
B+			3.300
B	Good	Satisfactory	3.000
B-			2.700
C+			2.300
C	Passing		2.000
C-		Minimum Passing	1.700
D	Minimum Passing	Not Available	1.000
F	Failure	Failure	0.000
I/F	Expired Incomplete in a course graded A-F	Expired Incomplete in a course graded A-F	0.000
I/U	Expired Incomplete in a course graded S/U	Expired Incomplete in a course graded S/U	N/A
S	Satisfactory (equal to C or better)	Satisfactory (equal to B or better)	N/A
U	Unsatisfactory (equal to below C)	Unsatisfactory (equal to below B)	N/A

Under **special circumstances, described below**, the following grades may be assigned, none of which yield grade points:

Grade	Definition
SAU	Audit (Satisfactory)
UAU	Audit (Unsatisfactory)
I	Incomplete
R	Course that was repeated
NR	[Grade] Not Received
W	Withdraw
WF	Withdraw Failing

B. Special Grades

a. Audits. Audited courses are non-credit, do not meet any degree requirements, and aren't counted toward enrollment status. Regularly enrolled students may register to audit ESF courses on a space-available basis and with the permission of the instructor. Audits will be graded either SAU (satisfactory audit) or UAU (unsatisfactory audit) and appear on a student's transcript. The grade will be assigned based on the criteria for the audit established by the course instructor at the start of the course.

b. Incomplete (I). A temporary grade of I may be assigned by an instructor only when the student has nearly completed the course but because of significant circumstances beyond the student's control the work is not completed. Grades of I should be resolved within one academic year. If the incomplete is not resolved within one year, it will be changed to a grade of I/F or I/U, depending on the grading basis for the course. No degree will be conferred until all grades of I have been resolved.

c. Missing grades (NR). A temporary grade of NR may be assigned by the Registrar when the course grade is not received from the course instructor by the grade deadline (**Section VI**). Grades of NR should be resolved within 30 days of the scheduled completion of a course. If the NR grade is not resolved by this time, a grade will be determined utilizing the assignment of grades when the instructor is not available (**Section II**). No degree will be conferred until all grades of NR have been resolved.

d. Repeating Courses (R). Courses taken at ESF or Syracuse University that contribute to the GPA may be repeated. Ability to repeat a course may be limited by available space, providing priority for first-time registrants. Upon completion of the repeated course, the grade earned will be included in the semester and cumulative grade point averages. The original grade received in the course will be shown in parentheses following the R [e.g. R (C)]. The cumulative grade point average will reflect the grade for the second time the course was taken if the course was repeated once. Grades for all subsequent attempts (including failed attempts) will be included in the calculation of grade point average. Semester and cumulative grade point averages will be calculated in accordance with SUNY and college policies. The course's credits can count only once toward degree requirements. The "R" grade may be applied to replace initial course grades higher than "F" only if the course was initially taken in the Fall 2009 semester or later.

For state-based financial aid, repeated courses in which students have received a passing grade will not count toward full-time status. Students retaking courses may find their financial aid reduced if they fall below 12 credits when the retaken courses are not included. Students should contact the Financial Aid Office to determine the impact of retaking courses on their financial aid.

e. Withdrawal from Individual Courses (and resulting grades):

e.1. Drop Period. Courses dropped before the Drop deadline will not appear on the student's transcript.

e.2. Withdrawal Period (W). A student who withdraws from a course between the drop deadline and the withdrawal deadline will receive a W grade on his or her permanent transcript, and will remain on the course roster. The W grade will not affect the GPA, and is not replaceable with an R grade.

e.3. Late Withdrawal Period (W/WF). A student who withdraws from a course after the withdrawal deadline and before the late withdrawal deadline will, at the time of the late withdrawal, receive a W or a WF on his or her permanent transcript, based on whether s/he is passing or failing the course. The student will remain on the course roster. The W or WF grade will not count in the student's GPA. W and WF grades are not replaceable with an R grade.

e.4. Definition of deadlines. During the academic semester the course drop deadline will be at the end of the fourth week of the semester, the withdrawal deadline will be at the end of the ninth week and the late withdrawal deadline will be the end of the fourteenth week. For courses that are not 15 weeks long the drop deadline will be 25% of the course duration, the withdrawal deadline will be 60% of the course duration, and the late withdrawal deadline will be 90% of the course duration.

Specific deadline dates, as defined above, shall be listed on the ESF Academic Calendar found on the Registrar's webpage (www.esf.edu/registrar/calendar.asp).

e.5. Procedures for dropping or withdrawing from a course. Courses dropped by the end of the fourth week are dropped using the registration form. Withdrawing from a course requires a completed course withdrawal form and must be in the Registrar's office no later than 4:30 PM on the deadline date as posted in the ESF Academic Calendar.

f. De-enrollment from ESF (W/WF): Students who de-enroll (i.e. withdraw from matriculation) from the College on or before the course withdrawal deadline will have their transcript marked: "Withdrew on (date)." Courses will appear for that semester with the grade of W. Students, who de-enroll after the late withdrawal deadline, but on or before the last class day before the final examination period, will have either W (withdraw passing) or WF (withdraw failing) listed after each uncompleted course based upon whether s/he is passing or failing the course. Students who do not withdraw on or before the last class day will have the appropriate grade, as described above (**Section III.A.**), assigned by the instructor for each registered course.

IV. Calculation of Grade Point Average

Semester and cumulative averages are calculated by dividing the total grade points by total credits completed for all courses graded A-F. Total grade points are calculated by multiplying the number of quality points associated with a grade by the number of credits for the course receiving that grade and then totaling the results. Only credits that have been assigned a letter grade are used to calculate the average. Transferred courses, audited courses, courses graded S or U and courses in which a W or a WF has been assigned, are not used in calculating semester or cumulative grade point averages. See **Section III.d.** to determine how repeated courses impact your cumulative average.

V. Final Exam Period

The final exam period is a time after classes have ended wherein summative evaluation of student performance is conducted by means of (1) examination, or (2) submission or presentation of a class project. Final examinations should not be administered before the final exam period. Courses should not require both (1) an examination, and (2) submission or presentation of a class project during the final exam period.

Students are not required to take more than two final exams in the same day as per the Registrar's final exam schedule. Students who have more than two exams scheduled in one day should work with their instructors to reschedule within the final exam period. Rescheduling accommodations must be made no less than two (2) weeks before the scheduled exam and be rescheduled during the final examination week.

VI. Timeliness of Final Course Grade Reporting

Each semester, the Registrar shall provide all Instructors of Record with a final examinations schedule. Final grades shall be submitted within seven (7) calendar days of the completion of the Final Examination period or, for the Ranger School, seven (7) calendar days after the last day of the semester.

VII. Requirement of a Course Syllabus

All credit bearing courses are required to have a course syllabus. Syllabi will be filed in the office of the respective department office and made available to students in the course on the first day of class.

Syllabi must include a course outline and schedule, student learning outcomes, elements of course evaluation and how they will be used to calculate the final grade, attendance policy, office hours, office phone number and email address of the instructors of record. Syllabi will further include the College academic integrity and accommodations of disabilities statements.

VIII. Feedback to Students on Course Assignments

Faculty shall provide all students with timely, formative feedback so that students can gauge their progress and have an opportunity to improve their performance regarding the prescribed learning outcomes on all assigned course work, projects, and examinations.

IX. Academic Integrity

SUNY-ESF is committed to the highest standards of integrity as an essential pillar of scholarship in all academic disciplines. Violations of academic integrity may result in academic penalties.

All matters pertaining to the College of Environmental Science and Forestry Academic Integrity Code of Student Conduct are under the purview of the Office of the Provost and are administered by the Coordinator of Judicial Affairs (or designee). Details about the judicial process, sanctions and the rights of students and faculty with respect to academic integrity can be found in the Academic Integrity Handbook. (Academic Integrity Handbook can be found at www.esf.edu/students/handbook/integrity.pdf)

X. Grade Changes

Grades may be changed at any time within 2 years of the completion of the semester for which the original grade has been awarded.

Grades may be changed only for valid reasons:

- Correction of error in calculating or recording the original grade.
- Removal of a grade of an I or an I/F (following completion of unfinished work).
- Response to a student's successful academic grievance (as provided for in appendix C of the ESF Student Handbook).
- Determination of academic dishonesty after initial grade posting.

Inappropriate reasons for changing grades include but are not limited to:

- Saving a student from academic penalty such as dismissal, probation, warning or academic integrity problem
- Enabling a student to graduate
- Enabling a student to maintain eligibility for financial aid
- Enabling a student to graduate with academic honors, or meet some other established minima
- Personal issues unrelated to academics
- Enabling a student to maintain academic eligibility for athletics or any other co-curricular activity
- Managing enrollment levels in order to preserve programs or revenue, or to increase retention rates

If the appropriate faculty member should become unable¹ to responsibly act in this capacity, the college may act administratively to change a grade.

To change a grade administratively, the Chair or the Program Director of the department offering the course, and the Provost or their designee, shall jointly submit a formal directive to the Registrar. A report of the grade change will be provided to the instructor of record (if contactable); a copy will also be retained in the student's records.

XI. Grade Grievances/Appeals

Assignment of grades is at the discretion of the Instructors of Record. However, assignment of grades must not be arbitrary or prejudicial; all students must be treated equally and in accordance with grading policies articulated in the course syllabus. Grade grievances, therefore, are restricted to claims of arbitrary or prejudicial grading practices. Third party grade grievances will not be accepted.

Process for grievance/appeal:

a. Initiation of Grade Grievance:

Before filing a Grade Grievance, the complainant must have met with the instructor to explain his/her complaint and to seek a resolution. Failing resolution through discourse with the instructor, the complainant may file a Grade Grievance with the Associate Provost for Instruction (hereafter referred to as the Associate Provost). The Grievance must be in the form of a written statement indicating the course and instructor, and making the case that the grade assignment was arbitrary or prejudicial. The Associate Provost will determine if the statement describes a possible case of arbitrary or prejudicial grading. If so, the Associate Provost will notify the instructor's department chair, instructor of record and the Chair of IQAS of the Grade Grievance and the process will proceed to mediation.

b. Mediation

The Associate Provost will arrange for the student and the instructor to meet with an impartial, professional mediator. The mediator will submit a report to the Associate Provost indicating the outcome of the mediation. If the mediation results in a mutually agreeable resolution, a written statement of the resolution, signed by the complainant and the instructor, will be part of the mediator's report; the Associate Provost then will notify the disputants, the instructor's department chair, and the Chair of IQAS that the Grievance is closed. If no mutually agreeable resolution is achieved through mediation, the Grievance will proceed to a Grievance Hearing.

c. Grievance Hearing

IQAS will create a Hearing sub-Committee (hereafter called the Hearing Committee) that shall consist of three elected members of the IQAS Committee and two officers from either the Undergraduate Student Association (in the case of undergraduate grievances) or the Graduate Student Association (in the case of graduate student grievances) or the Ranger School Student Governance Body (in the case of Ranger School student grievances). Hearing Committee members who cannot serve impartially should recuse themselves. Disputants concerned about the impartiality of any member, should bring their concern to the attention of the Associate Provost before the hearing. The Associate Provost, in collaboration with the Chair of Faculty Governance, is authorized to replace Hearing Committee members who, in his/her judgment, have potential conflicts of interest regarding the case.

d. Operating Procedures

A hearing will be conducted at which the complainant, the instructor, and the Hearing Committee should be present. The Student Conduct Coordinator will officiate, but is not involved in the deliberations. Prior to the hearing, the complainant's written grievance, the instructor's written response (if one has been provided), and the mediator's report should be provided to the Hearing Committee. The complainant and/or the instructor may also provide additional supporting documentation to the Hearing Committee (through the Associate Provost) prior to the hearing. To begin the hearing the complainant will state his/her full case. The instructor may then provide a rebuttal. The complainant and instructor will each be given one additional opportunity to address points made by the other. Hearing Committee members may ask clarifying questions of the complainant and the instructor during or after the disputants' testimony. When the testimony and questions have concluded, the disputants will be dismissed and the Hearing Committee will determine, by majority vote, the resolution to the dispute. The resolution will be in written form and provide definitive actions and the rationale for them. The resolution will be given to the Student Conduct Coordinator for transmittal to the Associate Provost. Hearings shall be conducted in confidence; the Associate Provost will keep a record of all grievance proceedings and all documentation.

e. Appeals

All decisions of the IQAS hearing committee are final and may not be appealed unless there is substantial and documentable evidence of a procedural error denying either party of due process, or if new and extraordinary evidence contradicting the findings of the Hearing Committee can be provided. Appeals should be submitted to the Associate Provost for Instruction who will determine if the conditions for appeal have been met. If the request for appeal is accepted, the Hearing Committee shall be reconstituted at the direction of the Associate Provost and Executive Chair of Faculty Governance with the consultation of the Chair of IQAS.

f. Timeline for grievance/appeal

A Grade Grievance must be initiated by the end of the semester following the semester in which the act or circumstances causing the grievance occurred. This time limit may be extended by the Chair of IQAS, upon good cause. The grade grievance shall be resolved during the semester in which the formal review occurs. The time limits defined for the grievance process can be extended a semester in the event that the Associate Provost or the Chair of the Instructional Quality and Academic Standards Committee believes that it is in the best interest of justice to do so.

g. Communication of results

The Associate Provost will transmit the written findings and decisions of the Hearing Committee to the disputants with acknowledgment of receipt required. Copies will be also sent to the Chair of IQAS and the instructor's department chair. The Associate Provost will execute the Hearing Committee's decisions, informing the above-mentioned parties when it has been completed.

XII. Grade Records & Maintenance

a. The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 permits current or former students to inspect and review their educational records. Students are also afforded the right to a hearing in order to question the content of their educational records. Written consent of students may be required before personally identifiable information about them will be released from their educational records, as provided by law. Applicants or students may waive their rights to inspect confidential letters or statements of recommendations.

Further information about ESF's FERPA compliance can be found at <http://www.esf.edu/consumer/FERPA.pdf>

b. Length of time to maintain records (Faculty). Faculty should maintain academic records they use to determine grades consistent with SUNY's Records Retention Policy. Grade records, test scores and marking sheets must be kept for a minimum of two (2) years. Completed

examination test papers and answer sheets, not returned to the student, must be kept for a minimum of one (1) year. Course or laboratory attendance records must be kept for six (6) years.

Records retention policy is here: http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=650; the particular section pertaining to grading records for tests, papers, etc., is in the Appendices, “Academic Affairs and Instruction.” http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/lookup.cfm?lookup_id=653